

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
52nd Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 13-17 June 2016

Report and Decisions of the 52nd Meeting of the Standing Committee

Wednesday 15 June 2016

10:00-13:00

Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 1: Opening statements

1. Opening statements were made by:
 - i. **Jorge Rucks**, Uruguay, Chair of the Ramsar Standing Committee
 - ii. **Mark Smith**, on behalf of the Director General of IUCN
 - iii. **Denis Landenbergue**, WWF, on behalf of Ramsar's International Organization Partners (IOPs)
 - iv. **Ania Grobicki**, Acting Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the revised draft agenda

2. The **Acting Secretary General (ASG)** introduced Doc. SC52-01 Rev.1*Draft Agenda and Programme*), noting that "on-line" should be deleted from the reference to a decision under item 15 *Update on the preparation of the National Report format for COP13*; this would now read "Approval of National Report Format for reporting to COP13".
3. In response to a suggestion by **Romania** supported by **Senegal**, the Standing Committee agreed to swap agenda item 18 (*Update on partnerships and synergies*) and item 23 (*Update on the process of selection of the new Secretary General*) in the running order of the meeting.
4. **Senegal** proposed moving discussion of item 4 (*Report of the Management Working Group*) after discussion of item 6 (*Approval of terms of reference for a future language strategy for the Convention*). The delegate also proposed adding discussion of progress made by Working Groups to this item.

Decision SC52-01: The Standing Committee approved the revised agenda, with the inclusion of discussion of progress made by Working Groups in the item on *Report of the Management Working Group*, and changes in running order of this item and those on *Update on partnerships and synergies* and *Update on the process of selection of the new Secretary General*, as set out in Doc. SC52-01 Rev.2.

Agenda item 3: Admission of observers

5. The ASG read out a list of observers requiring approval of Standing Committee to attend the meeting, as included in SC52 Inf.Doc.09 Rev.1.

Decision SC52-02: The Standing Committee admitted the observers listed by the Acting Secretary General as contained in SC52 Inf.Doc. 09 Rev.1.

Agenda item 5: Report of the Sub-Group on COP13

6. The **ASG** drew attention to Doc. SC52-02 *Progress with preparations for COP13*.
7. The **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, as chair of the Sub-Group on COP13, summarized progress to date in preparations for COP13, including the outcomes of the meeting of the Sub-Group on COP13 which had taken place the previous day. The venue of the event will be the Dubai World Trade Centre, between 21 and 29 October 2018. Progress had been made in developing the MOU between the UAE and the Secretariat, but it had not been finalized. The UAE had been raising the profile of the Convention in meetings of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) and the Arab League, and believed it was important to make every effort to incorporate the use of Arabic into the COP.
8. The **UAE** reported that they had proposed a theme of “Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future” and took note of the comments. Members of the Sub-Group had called attention to the need for the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards to be discussed at the 53rd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC53), emphasized the importance of starting fundraising for the COP as soon as possible, and drawn attention to the number of Russian-speaking Contracting Parties who would be present. The UAE reported that they would analyse the proposal by the Parties of the Africa region to include a high-level segment of some kind within the meeting. The Sub-Group members had also stressed the importance of trying to ensure that Draft Resolutions proposed for adoption at the COP were manageable in number, fully aligned with the Ramsar Strategic Plan and evaluated prior to the COP with respect to their financial implications, as set out in the Rules of Procedure.
9. The Observer from **MedWet**, echoed by **Romania**, noted that the Sub-Group had also discussed the importance of the participation of Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) at the COP. MedWet further stressed the importance of involving local people in the COP.
10. The **UAE** noted that the MOU was still in draft form, and that comments made at the Sub-Group meeting would be taken into account when finalizing it. All suggestions made during the Sub-Group meeting regarding the wording of the proposed theme for COP13 had been noted and would be considered further. The UAE was working with hosts of previous COPs to ensure that all lessons learned were taken into account.
11. The **Standing Committee** took note of the report from the UAE of the Sub-Group’s work, and of progress made in preparations for COP13.

Agenda item 4: Approval of terms of reference for a future language strategy for the Convention

12. The **Secretariat** introduced Doc. SC52-03 (*Consultancy support for the development of a strategy outlining the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Convention*) noting that this item had been held over from SC51 as there had been no time to discuss it at that meeting.

13. **Canada** drew attention to the non-core budget of USD 250,000 allocated in Annex 3 of Resolution XII.1 for Arabic language introduction and translation support; it would be her understanding that the budget proposed here would come out of that budget.
14. The **United States of America (USA)** raised a number of concerns including: inconsistency between the agenda item, which was to discuss the terms of reference for a future language strategy, and the document, which set out terms of reference for a consultant to support the development of a strategy; whether the language skills set out as a requirement were the most appropriate for the consultant to have; what was meant by “relevant Contracting Parties”; what the role of Contracting Parties was expected to be; exactly what work was expected to be undertaken; who were the intended recipients of the proposed survey; whether the issue would be addressed of how effectively the three languages of the Convention are currently integrated into the workings of the Convention; and whether the impact of incorporating new languages on the overall budget would be addressed. The delegate underlined the importance of ensuring that working methods were as cost-efficient as possible.
15. **Colombia** drew attention to Recommendation 5.15 and suggested that Arab-speaking Contracting Parties might be approached for financial support. The delegate considered that the consultant should have experience of working with Secretariats of Multilateral Environmental Agreements and believed it important to address the question of whether any changes in the operation of the Convention would be financially sustainable.
16. **Senegal** noted that under Resolution XII.3 the priority should be first to address the potential cost of integrating Arabic into the working languages of the Convention. Concrete figures for this should be available for SC53 along with a strategy for the other two UN languages. He believed that the time allocated to the consultancy could be considerably reduced.
17. **Romania** believed that it should be a basic requirement that the consultant is familiar with the working of Ramsar.
18. **MedWet** noted that this Regional Initiative was working towards full incorporation of Arabic and offered to share its experience.
19. **The SC Chair** proposed establishing a working group, to be open ended but comprising at least Colombia, Senegal, UAE, USA and Romania if they so wished, to work with the Secretariat to produce revised terms of reference for the meeting to consider.
20. The **Standing Committee** agreed to establish an open-ended informal working group, comprising at least Colombia, Senegal, UAE, USA and Romania, to review the Terms of Reference set out in Annex 1 to Doc. SC52-03 and asked the group to provide revised terms of reference for the Committee to consider later in the meeting.

Agenda item 6: Report of the Management Working Group

Closed session of the Standing Committee

15:00-18:00

Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 7: Report of the Acting Secretary General

21. The **ASG** presented the Report (SC52-04 Rev.2 *Report of the Acting Secretary General*) in line with the requirements of paragraph 7.c of Resolution XII.4 and the Interim Arrangements for Secretariat Administration prepared by the Executive Team in November 2015, and outlining the activities which would be discussed in further detail in other SC52 agenda items.
22. The **USA** thanked the ASG for the Report and acknowledged the underlying work of the Secretariat, notably in reducing the list of consultancies, streamlining the use of resources and improving the Convention website and accessibility of documents to the benefit of Contracting Party users. The USA would welcome further limiting of travel to active interventions, in line with the Strategic Plan and in line with the practices developed by other Conventions.
23. The **Standing Committee** took note of the Report of the ASG, and acknowledged the good work of the Secretariat during this important and challenging period.

Agenda item 8: Report on Secretariat actions arising from SC51

24. The **ASG** summarized SC52-Inf.Doc.02 *Secretariat actions arising from SC51 Decisions*, and noted that all actions had been completed except for the final two listed:
 - Regarding Decision SC51-21 instructing the Secretariat to present a revised CEPA Action Plan to SC52, the Working Group on CEPA Implementation was expected to present the Action Plan later in the meeting;
 - The contents of Decision SC51-22 would be addressed under SC52 Agenda item 20 (Report of the Sub-Group on Finance).
25. The **Standing Committee** took note of the status of actions arising from SC51 as outlined in SC52-Inf.Doc.02.

Agenda item 9: Report on actions arising from COP12 Resolutions

26. The **ASG** summarized SC52-Inf.Doc.03 *Standing Committee actions arising from COP12 Resolutions and SC50 Decisions*, and noted that all the actions arising would be addressed under other SC52 agenda items including reports of Sub-Groups and Working Groups, except for those items which had already been addressed:
 - The outcomes of the meeting of the expert group on indicators for the Ramsar Strategic Plan had been reported to SC51 in SC51 Inf.Doc.05;
 - The invitation to Parties pursuant to CBD Decision XII/30 had been addressed in Diplomatic Note2015Note2015/4.
27. The **USA** questioned the need for agenda items to review such Information Documents.
28. The **Standing Committee** took note of the status of actions arising from COP12 Resolutions as outlined in SC52-Inf.Doc.03.

Agenda item 10: Update on the status of the Ramsar List

29. The **ASG** presented the *Update on the status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Doc. SC52-06) and its annexes. She announced, to general acclamation, that the number of Sites on the Montreux Record had just been reduced to 46 with the submission of a report by the Ramsar Administrative Authority for Tunisia outlining the actions completed to enable the removal of Ramsar Site no. 213, Ichkeul, from the Record.
30. The **ASG** also drew attention to a recent analysis showing the growing number of Sites with multiple designations under the Ramsar Convention, the World Heritage Convention, UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and the Global Geoparks Network.
31. **Kenya, Tunisia** and **MedWet** observed that multiple designations of Sites under different international processes could be valuable in reinforcing the protection and management of Sites, but MedWet also observed that in such multi-designated Sites the Ramsar designation often had low visibility.
32. **Canada** sought clarification as to what further information might be required regarding Site no. 243 Fraser River in Annex 4b.
33. **Argentina, China, El Salvador** (with financial assistance from **Japan**) and **Nepal** (with financial assistance from **Norway**) reported that they were updating information on their Sites. **Switzerland** reported that it was updating Sites using the new format, which was proving to be labour-intensive and resulting in very extensive documents.
34. **Senegal**, on behalf of the African region and his own government, made a statement (see Annex 1 of this report) thanking WWF International for its assistance to Tunisia with regard to Ichkeul. The delegate also wished to thank Wetlands International and the African Wildlife Foundation for assistance in Senegal, noting also that the country was working with technical partners including IUCN in addressing issues at Site no. 139, Bassin du Ndiaël, and hoped that this would soon come off the Montreux Record. Senegal was planning for two Ramsar Advisory Missions and, thanks to recently approved support from the Swiss Government, would be able to update the information on its Ramsar Sites for the first time.
35. **Uganda** reported it was undertaking desk studies in preparation for requested Ramsar Advisory Missions. **Iraq** asked for a Ramsar Advisory Mission for Site no. 1718, Hawizeh Marsh, and reported that it had designated two new Ramsar Sites at the end of 2015.
36. In response to a question from **Norway**, the **ASG** drew attention to the list of Ramsar Advisory Missions requested by countries for 2016 in Doc. SC52.20.
37. **Colombia** noted that the country had sent updates on Sites in Annexes 4a and 4b of the document in November 2015 but that this new information did not appear in the document. The **Republic of Korea** said that the country had provided updated information on Site no. 1594, Suncheon Bay, and asked it to be removed from the list in Annex 4b of the document.
38. The **UAE** stated that all Sites in the country had information in the RSIS less than six years old, and so the UAE should be removed from the list in Annex 3b.

39. **Australia** noted that it had three Sites with long-standing open files under Article 3.2. This was a reflection of the complexity of the issues surrounding these Sites and Australia’s commitment to dealing with these issues rigorously and comprehensively.
40. The **Democratic Republic of Congo** reaffirmed his country’s commitment to maintaining Ramsar Sites, but drew attention to its lack of resources. The country was working with WWF to designate a new Site.
41. **Turkmenistan** noted that no updates had been submitted in over six years for more than 80% of Ramsar Sites in the Central Asian region and appealed for support to help remedy this. Turkmenistan was working on the designation of two new Sites with the help of RSPB, a BirdLife partner. The delegate reported that Parties in the sub-region were taking steps to establish a Ramsar Regional Initiative.
42. **South Africa** stated that one of the country’s Sites was very close to being removed from the Montreux Record and that a new Ramsar Site was close to being designated.
43. **Birdlife**, speaking on behalf of the IOPs, believed that the Montreux Record was not as effective a tool as it could be and suggested that all future SC meetings include as regular agenda items reports on actions taken nationally to address factors adversely affecting Sites on the Montreux Record, and reports on actions taken in response to advice received from Ramsar Advisory Missions.

Decision SC52-03: The Standing Committee took note of the report presented by the Secretariat and instructed the Secretariat, according to its capacities, to strengthen its interaction with Contracting Parties regarding the longest-running Article 3.2 files, particularly those for which no information had been forthcoming for a long period.

Agenda item 11: Secretariat Work Plans
 a. Work Plan for the 2016-2018 triennium (SC52-07 *Secretariat Work Plan for the 2016-2018 triennium*)
 and
 b. Work Plan for 2016 (SC52-08 *Secretariat Work Plan for 2016*)

44. The **ASG** introduced the proposed Secretariat Work Plans for the 2016-2018 triennium and for 2016, contained in Annex 1 of Doc. SC52-07 and Doc. SC52-08 respectively.
45. **Canada** observed that, in the 2016 Work Plan, the Head of Partnerships was identified as a team leader for several activities but noted that this post was vacant, so that some reallocation of responsibilities would be necessary.
46. **El Salvador** stressed the importance of including interaction with other international processes, such as those involved in disaster risk reduction, in the Work Plans. The delegate believed that activity 19.4 concerned with organizing and holding Standing Committees would be more appropriately included under Target 20.
47. **Colombia** stated that they had some comments on some of the proposed indicators, which they would submit in writing.
48. **South Africa** stressed the importance of fundraising and considered the title “Head of Partnerships” might distract from this role.

49. **Finland** commended the use of the Strategic Plan Targets as a framework for organizing the Work Plans. The delegate commented on Target 3, encouraging the inclusion of the energy sector and drawing attention to approaches adopted in other fora, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and its private-sector approach Global Partnership with 20 Contracting Parties. In Target 5 the delegate noted that Contracting Parties might have other management effectiveness evaluation tools in addition to the R-METT or similar tools referred to. The delegate encouraged Ramsar to be fully engaged in activities under Target 18 during the next triennium.
50. The **USA** also appreciated the linkage with the Strategic Plan and had a number of other comments: the 2016 Work Plan seemed excessively ambitious, given that half the year had already elapsed; for some elements, particularly ones that were not tightly time-bound, it was not clear why they had been included in this Work Plan; it would be helpful to know the actual status of some of the identified activities, such as revision of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs); in both Work Plans the importance of communication had not been adequately stressed; in some cases reference was made to Resolutions from earlier COPs when there were relevant COP12 Resolutions that should have been cited instead; some elements were not tied to specific Resolutions and the reasons for their inclusion should be made clear; some activities were elements of Resolutions directed at Contracting Parties, not the Secretariat, and should be deleted; some activities could be combined; an expansive approach had been taken to some tasks; in some cases team leaders had not been identified; some of the proposed indicators were in fact activities; and in Target 19 references to peer-reviewing and a document review process should be deleted.
51. **Japan** considered that the continuing provision of assistance to Contracting Parties in completing RISs and updating the RSIS should be included under Target 5 of the Work Plans.
52. **Senegal** agreed with many of the comments made by previous speakers and also suggested that the Work Plans be linked explicitly to the budget and, more widely, to the Sustainable Development Goals. In Target 17 the delegate considered that the reduction in the total amount of outstanding contributions was better as an indicator than a reduction in the number of Parties with outstanding contributions. The delegate proposed that resource mobilization for pre-COP regional meetings begin in 2016, and that, under Target 17, the Secretariat should approach Emirates and the MAVA Foundation.
53. **Romania** suggested that the Secretariat look at the indicators in the Strategic Plan and use adapted versions of these in the Work Plans.
54. **Birdlife** drew attention to work on indicators under other processes, such as that of the CBD *ad hoc* technical expert group on indicators and asked whether it was intended to revise indicators in the Ramsar Strategic Plan. The importance of linking the Ramsar Strategic Plan indicators to those used in other processes was stressed by **Senegal**, **MedWet** and **WaterLex**.
55. The **Standing Committee** instructed the Secretariat to prepare revised Secretariat Work Plans for 2016 and the 2016-18 triennium, taking into account any comments received from Contracting Parties present, for the Standing Committee to review on Friday 17 June.

Thursday 16 June 2016

10:00-13:00

Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 12: Costs of actions to implement COP12 Resolutions in the 2016-2018 triennium
(SC52-09 Rev.1 *Costs of actions to implement COP12 Resolutions in the 2016-2018 triennium*)

56. The **ASG** introduced Doc. SC52-09. Rev.1 and its annexes, stating that they had been prepared in response to Decision SC51-10. She noted that under the Rules of Procedure the Secretariat was obliged to report at the start of each COP the projected administrative and financial implications of all substantive agenda items, but that this had not been done at COP12.
57. The **USA** sought clarification of some of the figures included in the annexes. The delegate believed that in Annex 3 of Resolution XII.1, Parties had clearly identified their priorities for expenditure of non-core funds during 2016-2018, and the amounts they had allocated to each of these priority areas. The delegate sought clarification regarding the basis on which additional non-core funds had been identified as needed for some activities, and expressed concern that the Secretariat might be raising funds for activities that had not been identified as priorities by the Parties, or through entities with which the Secretariat had no MOU. The delegate noted that Parties at COP12 had clearly expressed the view that implementation of Resolution XII.10 should not incur any costs. Some of the actions identified in Annex 2 of the document were intended to be carried out by Parties; these would not be expected to be funded through the Convention. Amounts allocated to some other activities seemed unnecessarily high.
58. **Switzerland** concurred with the points made by the USA. She drew attention to the Helsinki Convention and suggested some of the actions in item 3.54 in Annex 2 of the document could be carried out at very low cost through attending meetings associated with that Convention in Geneva. The delegate also believed that the costs of the Ramsar COP should be incorporated into the core budget as the current arrangement imposed a heavy workload on the Secretariat.
59. **Senegal** also did not understand why an extra column indicating additional non-core funds had been included in each of the annexes to the document. **Finland** shared the concerns of the USA, Switzerland and Senegal. **Honduras** sought clarification regarding actions under Resolution XII.3.
60. **WWF** reiterated its commitment to provide funding for action under item 5.24 of Annex 2 of the document, contingent on the relevant part of the STRP's Work Plan being approved by the Standing Committee.
61. The **Standing Committee** requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised version of Doc. SC52-09 Rev.1, taking into account comments from Parties, and present it at a later session.

Agenda item 13: Report of the Chair of the STRP (SC52-10 *Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and amended draft STRP 2016-2018 Work Plan*)

62. The **Chair of the STRP** introduced Doc. SC52-10, containing his report and the amended draft STRP 2016-2018 Work Plan.
63. The **USA** appreciated the effort that had gone into the amended Work Plan, believing it to be the first time that an STRP Work Plan had comprehensively addressed Parties' priorities. The

delegate hoped the STRP would work closely with CEPA to ensure that STRP outputs would reach the widest possible audience and provide effective links between science and policy. The delegate believed that the Work Plan should focus very clearly on the 11 priority tasks identified in paragraph 20 of the document; that tasks 3.1 and 3.2 might be combined; that it might be useful to see reference to extractive industries in task 4.1; and include lessons learned in balancing the needs of those industries with wetland conservation in task 4.2.

64. In response to a question from the **USA**, the **STRP Chair** explained that the CHF 118,000 available from the STRP's budget for the previous triennium was from additional voluntary contributions that remained unspent. He suggested retaining all the tasks in the draft Work Plan so that the STRP could undertake initial cost-free planning work for those not in the list in paragraph 20 of Doc. SC52-10.
65. **Canada** supported the Work Plan and asked how Ramsar National Focal Points (NFPs) fitted into the work of the STRP. The **STRP Chair** replied that NFPs would be given the opportunity to participate in the development of STRP products and review them to ensure that they met the needs of the Parties.
66. The **Russian Federation** believed that NFPs should be as closely involved as possible in the work of the STRP, and emphasized the importance of the latter's proposed work on peatlands.
67. **Estonia** on behalf of the European Region, and **Azerbaijan**, supported the Work Plan. The latter Party and **Colombia** emphasised the importance of the STRP working with other scientific bodies and processes such as IPBES.
68. **Japan** also supported the Work Plan and drew attention to a project they had carried out in cooperation with Myanmar, Vietnam and BirdLife International – Tokyo on the economic valuation of wetland ecosystem services. They had developed a guide on the rapid evaluation of wetland ecosystem services that they would be happy to share with the STRP as a contribution to tasks in Thematic Work Area 3.
69. **Australia** on behalf of the Oceania Region also welcomed the Work Plan and particularly commended the incorporation of indigenous and local knowledge, notably in Thematic Work Area 3.1. He stated that New Zealand could provide useful information and case studies on the issue.
70. **Senegal** supported the Work Plan and asked how his country might benefit from STRP support, particularly regarding Site no. 139, currently on the Montreux Record. The **STRP Chair** replied that STRP members could participate in Ramsar Advisory Missions if appropriate.
71. **Brazil**, supported by **Colombia**, noted that proposed task 2.5 on management of mosquito disease vectors in wetlands had not been included as a priority Thematic Work Area in Resolution XII.5 and believed that Ramsar was not the appropriate forum in which to address it. She asked for reference to it to be deleted from the Work Plan. The **Dominican Republic** believed this was an important issue but also expressed reservations about retaining it in the Work Plan as she thought it might be setting a precedent.
72. The **STRP Chair** stated that this subject had been raised as an emerging issue during consultations with Parties when the Work Plan was being revised following SC51.

73. The **USA** noted that the STRP was empowered by Resolution XII.5 to address emerging issues. While health might be beyond Ramsar's remit, the delegate believed the STRP could have a role in bringing together information so that health practitioners could understand that there were various ways of dealing with disease vectors in wetlands and that these ways had different environmental impacts.
74. The **Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya** and **Senegal** believed that proposed task 2.5 was important, **Senegal** drawing attention to Resolution XI.12 on wetlands and health, which made explicit reference to zoonoses.
75. **Wetlands International** described the work they had done that was relevant to task 3.3 on wetland ecosystems and disaster risk reduction and offered to share this with the STRP as a contribution to that task.
76. The **SC Chair** asked the STRP Chair to confer with interested Parties to reword task 2.5 and present a new version to the Committee at a later session.

Decision SC52-04: The Standing Committee approved the STRP 2016-2018 Work Plan in Doc. SC52-10, with the exception of task 2.5 *Management of mosquito disease vectors in wetland*, requested informal consultations between the involved countries, and amended to take into account the comments made at the meeting.

Agenda item 14: Ramsar Regional Initiatives
 b. Assessment of existing Ramsar Regional Initiatives
and
 c. Report of the Chair of the Working Group on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives

77. The Secretariat announced that agenda item 14 a. had been withdrawn.
78. The Secretariat introduced Doc. SC52-11 Rev.1 and **Uganda** as Chair of the Working Group on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives presented his report, as contained in Annex 1, explaining that the group had not completed its work.
79. **Senegal** believed strongly that, if the Standing Committee were to follow Resolution XII.8, it should address the revision of the Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives before it considered the endorsement of ongoing Ramsar Regional Initiatives. The delegate drew attention to the fact that in the Resolution the Standing Committee had been instructed to review the existing Operational Guidelines and adopt the necessary amendments no later than SC52.
80. **Switzerland**, supported by **Romania** and **South Africa**, believed that the new Operational Guidelines were close to being finalized and encouraged the Standing Committee to make every effort to finalize them before the end of the present meeting. **Romania** drew attention to Rule 39 of the Rules of Procedure.
81. The **Secretariat** observed that the 15 ongoing Ramsar Regional Initiatives listed in Doc. SC52-11 Rev.1 and the four proposed new Initiatives in Doc. SC52-12 had been evaluated against the existing Operational Guidelines and that the Standing Committee could choose to endorse these before they adopted revised Guidelines.

82. The **USA** pointed out that there was precedent for failure to fulfil the COP's instructions, and that there were potentially serious legal and financial implications in new Operational Guidelines that might need to be examined in detail by Parties. The delegate did not believe that there was any need to delay the endorsement of Initiatives that had already been assessed, and thought it just that any new Initiative be assessed against the guidelines in operation at the time when it applied for endorsement. This view was supported by **Argentina, Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador and MedWet**.
83. **Brazil** stated that they were prepared to continue discussion of the revised Operational Guidelines in the Working Group provided that the Rules of Procedure were adhered to.
84. The **Standing Committee** requested the Working Group on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives to continue its work in parallel and report back to the Standing Committee at a later session.

15:00-18:00

Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 18: Update on the process of selection of the new Secretary General

Closed session of the Standing Committee

85. Following the closed session, the **SC Chair** informed those present that a new Secretary General of the Convention had been selected unanimously and had signed the contract with IUCN. The SC Chair thanked the members of the Selection Committee, the members of the Standing Committee and his colleagues in the Executive Team for their contributions to the process. He announced to general acclaim that Martha Rojas-Urrego had agreed to take up the position on 1 September 2016.
86. The **SC Vice-Chair** read out the press release which accompanied the appointment.
87. The **SC Chair** noted that the Secretariat would thus have a strong and experienced leadership team, and, to widespread applause, thanked the ASG for all her work in the interim.

Decision SC52-05: The Standing Committee unanimously selected Martha Rojas-Urrego as new Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention.

Agenda item 15: Update on the preparation of the National Report format for COP13 (*SC52-13 Draft format for National Reports to COP13*)

88. The Secretariat introduced Doc. SC52-13 containing a draft COP13 National Reporting format (NRF) and made a presentation showing a possible on-line NRF.
89. **Senegal** observed that the draft NRF reflected the goals and targets of the new Ramsar Strategic Plan, as requested in Paragraph 17 of Resolution XII.2, but stated that the exact language of these goals and targets should be used in the NRF. The delegate believed reference should be made to the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The delegate considered it premature to introduce an on-line NRF for COP13, as many Parties did not have good access to the internet.

90. **Australia, China, Finland, Japan, South Africa, Switzerland, the USA and Uruguay**, while generally welcoming the proposed development of an on-line NRF, agreed that it was important to maintain an off-line system.
91. **Japan** expressed concern about the proposed inclusion of Section 3 concerning national targets, as no instruction from the COP had been given to include this as a new subject in National Reports. The delegate also asked that it be made clearer that Section 4 was optional, as it would involve a lot of work for Parties with a large number of Ramsar Sites.
92. The **USA** suggested removing Section 3 or moving it to a less prominent place and ensuring that it was made clear that this was an optional section applicable only to Parties that had relevant national targets. The delegate emphasised that the exact language used in Resolutions should be duplicated in the NRF and noted that, under paragraph 11 of the background information section, it should state that the primary purpose of reporting was to help Parties implement the Convention.
93. **Canada** expressed concern that the National Report for COP13 might be too early to report progress made on any national and regional targets that paragraph 22 of Resolution XII.2 encouraged Parties to develop and submit to the Secretariat on or before December 2016. **China, El Salvador, Honduras and the Republic of Korea** all also expressed some concern with the deadlines set.
94. The **SC Chair** asked those with specific comments on the NRF to forward these in writing to the Secretariat so that they could be incorporated into a revised version.

Decision SC52-06: The Standing Committee approved the National Report format for COP13 incorporating the comments made by Parties.

Decision SC52-07: The Standing Committee agreed that a National Reporting format could be made available to all Parties through an on-line system, together with an off-line option, and requested the Secretariat to present an evaluation for the next COP regarding the use of the on-line system.

Agenda item 16: Implementation of the Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention according to Resolution XII.10 (SC52-14 Rev.1 *Progress report on the implementation of the Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention*)

95. The Secretariat introduced Doc. SC52-14 Rev.1 and updated those present on the progress in implementing the Wetland City Accreditation. The Secretariat reported on the latest composition of the Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) and the representatives nominated by the organizations involved. The Secretariat noted that a Standing Committee member representative had been identified in four of the six Ramsar regions, with Latin America and the Caribbean and North America yet to identify a representative.
96. **Tunisia** welcomed the progress in mobilizing partners, and the composition of the IAC. The delegate hoped that the IAC membership would be finalized by December 2016 so that the current timetable could be adhered to.
97. The **USA** expressed reservations about approving an accreditation form which had not been annexed to the document, and an IAC of which the composition was yet to be finalized. The delegate also expressed concern about the demands placed on the Senior Regional Advisors in

supporting the process, and, noting the generous time allowed for the completion of applications, suggested bringing forward the deadline to extend the review phase.

98. **Kenya** underlined the need for careful consultation to ensure a high-quality product with rigorous processes. Echoed by the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, the delegate also noted the potential difficulty of national coordination of decentralised local government candidates.
99. **UN-Habitat** expressed support for the scheme and noted that the finalization and signing of the related MOU was awaiting the final details of the accreditation scheme. He hoped that Standing Committee would be able to approve the current version prior to the final review and signature.
100. **ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability** confirmed support for the scheme and commitment to the IAC. ICLEI requested consideration of a side event at COP13 involving Tunisia, the Republic of Korea, UN-Habitat and ICLEI's Regional Director.
101. The **Secretariat** stated that Senior Regional Advisors would review applications rather than attend IAC meetings; that the application period would enable the Secretariat to ensure the completeness of applications; that the IAC would work on finalizing the accreditation form; and that the adjective "Independent" had been selected by the COP to promote the objectivity of decisions.
102. **Senegal** noted that the scheme would promote *inter alia* the sustainable management of waste water and the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 6.6.

Decision SC52-08: The Standing Committee approved the composition and membership of the Independent Advisory Committee for Wetland City Accreditation as presented by the Secretariat (www.ramsar.org/document/sc52-presentation-progress-report-on-the-implementation-of-the-wetland-city-accreditation), and invited the North America and Latin America and the Caribbean regions to appoint members.

Decision SC52-09: The Standing Committee approved the continuation of the work according to the timetable for implementation of the Wetland City Accreditation, and requested continued actions to streamline processes and minimize the impact on Secretariat time and resources.

Agenda item 17: Update on the Ramsar Culture Network (SC52-Inf.Doc.06 *The Ramsar Culture Network and its contribution to the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024*)

103. The Secretariat introduced SC52-Inf.Doc.06 outlining the development and activities of the Ramsar Culture Network (RCN).
104. In response to requests for clarification from the **USA**, the **Secretariat** confirmed that the potential links with the CEPA programme would be strengthened following the approval of the Convention's CEPA Action Plan; that she was responsible for the raising of funding to match the MAVA Foundation's donation; that her work and the quality of Ramsar-branded outputs was overseen by the Senior Regional Advisor for Europe and the ASG as appropriate; and that more outcomes would be reported once the RCN had been fully established.

Agenda item 14: Ramsar Regional Initiatives

105. Following the request of the Standing Committee that the Working Group on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives continue its work in parallel, the Secretariat reported, on behalf of the Chair

of the Working Group, that the Group had made progress on the revision of the Operational Guidelines and that final text would be published for approval by the Standing Committee during the meeting.

Friday 17 June 2016

10:00-13:00

Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

106. The **SC Chair** stated that the Management Working Group had proposed a new running order for the day's work, with discussion of costs of actions to implement COP12 Resolutions in the 2016-2018 triennium to be discussed immediately after the update on partnerships and synergies, and CEPA and Secretariat Communications to be discussed after Secretariat Work Plans.
107. In discussion of Ramsar Regional Initiatives, the report of the Working Group would be presented by the Secretariat and the assessment of existing Ramsar Regional Initiatives and adoption of revised Operational Guidelines would be taken together. The Standing Committee agreed to the above mentioned changes related to the running order of the agenda.

Agenda item 23. Update on partnerships and synergies

- a. Progress on implementing Resolution XI.6 on Partnership and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions (*SC52-15 Progress on implementing Resolution XI.6 on Partnership and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions*)

108. The Secretariat introduced Doc. SC52-15, indicating that it was intended for information.
109. The **USA** recognized the benefits to Parties at national level of synergies but counselled that care should be taken that smaller Conventions such as Ramsar not lose their identity in the process. She pointed out that the reference to InforMEA in paragraph 17 was confusing, and that the first sentence of paragraph 20 was inaccurate.
110. **Switzerland** drew attention to Resolution 2/17 adopted by UNEA-2 on enhancing the work of UNEP in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions.
111. **Australia** and **Kenya** acknowledged the potential role of synergies in sharing information and reducing administrative and reporting burdens for Parties with limited resources.
112. The **Standing Committee** took note of Doc. SC52-15 on the understanding that the Secretariat would take account of the comments provided by contracting Parties.

Agenda Item 23 b. Update by UNEP, and video showing the UNEPLive platform linking the SDGs and the Ramsar Convention

113. **UNEP** gave a demonstration of the UNEPLive platform linking SDGs with multilateral environmental agreements including Ramsar, and thanked the Secretariat for their collaboration on the project.

114. **Switzerland** noted that there were a number of relevant international targets other than the SDGs, including the Ramsar Strategic Plan's own targets, which should not be sidelined.
115. **Senegal** described his country's role in developing work programmes on SDG targets 6.3 and 6.6 on a pilot basis and underlined the role of Ramsar Administrative Authorities in responding across the range of targets under SDG 6.
116. In response to an observation from **Kenya** regarding the potential for further work on the platform to identify all of the links between Conventions and SDGs, the **ASG** noted that the links in UNEP Live between the SDGs and the Ramsar Strategic Plan were created through the respective indicators, not through the goals or targets.

Agenda Item 23 c. Progress on MOUs (SC52-16 Rev.2 *Update on formal agreements and joint work plans of the Ramsar Convention and partners*)

117. The Secretariat introduced Doc. SC52-16 Rev.2.
118. **Japan**, echoed by **Australia**, welcomed the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the Nagao Natural Environment Foundation and the Secretariat in Annex 3, noting that it would allow for support of small projects within Asia and Oceania.
119. The **Democratic Republic of Congo** urged the Secretariat to look into the possibility of renewing the agreement with the Commission Internationale du Bassin Congo-Oubangui-Sangha (CICOS).
120. **Turkmenistan**, supported by **Azerbaijan**, drew attention to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention) and suggested the Secretariat engage with it.
121. **Brazil** proposed deletion of the sentence referring to REDD+ in paragraph b iv. of the Annex to the proposed MOU between UNEP and Ramsar and, supported by **Switzerland**, proposed adding a reference to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) at the end of the first sentence of paragraph a. iv. in the Annex. **Switzerland** proposed that the wording here be modified from "monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals" to follow-up and revision process of the Sustainable Development Goals by the HLPF.
122. The **USA** believed there should be a strict focus on MOUs and other such agreements that were of clear benefit to Ramsar and that there should be explicit reference to the goals and targets of the Strategic Plan in all MOUs. The delegate stated that all prescriptive language, such as the word "shall", should be removed from all MOUs, this being legal treaty language and inappropriate in this context. Any issues of potential liability, for example that in Article 12 of the proposed MOU with UNEP (Annex 2 of the document) and in Article 10 of the proposed MOU with UN-Habitat (Annex 5), should be reciprocal. The delegate also believed that the descriptions of UNEP and Ramsar in the chapeau of the draft MOU in Annex 2 should be more evenly balanced.
123. **Switzerland**, supported by **Finland** and **Senegal**, proposed that in future in order to streamline discussions in the SC, all new MOUs prepared by the Secretariat be reviewed by the Management Working Group immediately before SC meetings. **Senegal** further asked for the agreement between the Secretariat and the Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia, signed in

December 2015, to be included in the table in Annex 1 of the document. **Romania** pointed out an error in the opening paragraph of the MOU in Annex 3.

124. The **ASG** stated that the Secretariat would develop some standard paragraphs on Ramsar to include in MOUs, and that as far as possible a standard version based on the template used by IUCN would be used in future MOUs.

125. The **Standing Committee** took note of the agreement in Annex 4 between the Secretariat and the Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia.

Decision SC52-10: The Standing Committee approved the MOUs in Annexes 2, 3 and 5 of Doc. SC52-16 Rev.2, amended to take into account the comments made by the Contracting Parties.

Decision SC52-11: The Standing Committee decided that the Management Working Group be asked to review all new MOUs and other such agreements between the Ramsar Secretariat and other bodies, at its meeting immediately before the Standing Committee meeting at which the agreements were to be submitted for approval.

Agenda item 12: Costs of actions to implement COP12 Resolutions in the 2016-2018 triennium
(SC52-09 Rev.2 *Costs of actions to implement COP12 Resolutions in the 2016-2018 triennium*)

126. The **ASG** presented the document SC52-09 Rev.2, in which the figures in the text and the table at Annex 1 had been amended following the Standing Committee's earlier comments.

127. The **USA** advised the Secretariat to focus on raising the budgeted non-core funds, and if necessary at any point to identify where these prove insufficient and the impact on its work plan, for consideration by the MWG.

128. **Senegal**, on behalf of the African region, underlined the desirability and accessibility of non-core funding for implementation of Resolution XII.10 on *Wetland City accreditation*, but recognized the need to follow the decision of the Parties at COP12 expressed in Resolution XII.1 Annex 3.

129. The **Standing Committee** took note of the amended document and confirmed that the Secretariat should continue to focus on the non-core fundraising priorities identified in Resolution XII.1 Annex 3.

Agenda item 13: Report of the Chair of the STRP (SC52-10 *Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and amended draft STRP 2016-2018 Work Plan*)

130. The **Secretariat** reported on behalf of the STRP Chair that the interested Parties had reached agreement regarding Task 2.5 of the STRP Work Plan, and read out the amended text.

131. The **Standing Committee** took note of the amendment to the Work Plan.

Agenda item 11: Secretariat Work Plans
a. Work Plan for the 2016-2018 triennium (SC52-07 *Secretariat Work Plan for the 2016-2018 triennium*)
and
b. Work Plan for 2016 (SC52-08 *Secretariat Work Plan for 2016*)

132. The **ASG** introduced Doc. SC52-08 Rev.1, a modified version of the Secretariat's 2016 Work Plan that had been prepared in response to the request of the Standing Committee, taking into account its comments made earlier in the meeting. There had been insufficient time to revise the Work Plan for the 2016-2018 triennium.

133. **Honduras** pointed out that, because of the proposed timing of SC53, if only the 2016 Work Plan were approved, the Secretariat would be working without an approved Work Plan for the first half of 2017.

134. The **USA** advocated adopting a flexible approach, pointing out that many of the Secretariat's activities were ongoing and that many of the activities in the 2016 Work Plan would expect to continue into the rest of the triennium. However, the delegate still considered the 2016 Work Plan to be excessively ambitious and believed the Secretariat could benefit from further guidance from Parties as to how to streamline activities to ensure it was responding most effectively to Parties' needs.

135. The **SC Chair** drew attention to the difficult circumstances under which the Secretariat had been operating in recent months.

Decision SC52-12: The Standing Committee approved the revised Secretariat Work Plan for 2016 in Doc. SC52-08 Rev.1, taking into account the comments made and on the understanding that Parties might provide further advice on how to streamline activities.

Decision SC52-13: The Standing Committee decided to consider the Secretariat Work Plan for the 2016-2018 triennium at SC53.

Agenda item 19. CEPA and Secretariat Communications
a. Report of the CEPA Oversight Panel (verbal presentation)

136. The **Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee**, as Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel, presented the report of the Panel's meeting (as contained in Annex 2 of this report), stating that the panel expected to have finalized a work plan within the next six weeks.

137. In response to a question from **South Africa** concerning possible overlap of work with that of the CEPA Working Group, the **SC Vice-Chair** stated that, given the different mandates of the panel and the Working Group, he was confident there would be no overlap.

138. The **Standing Committee** took note of the report of the Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel.

Agenda item 19 b. Revised CEPA Action Plan for the Ramsar Secretariat 2016-2018

139. **South Africa**, as Chair of the Working Group on CEPA Implementation, presented the report of the Group's meeting and the revised CEPA Action Plan for the Secretariat (www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cepa_sec_action_plan_201618_e.pdf), noting that the Action Plan was now to run from 2016 to 2018 to align it with other activities under the Convention such as the STRP Work Plan and the Secretariat Work Plan.

140. **Australia, Democratic Republic of Congo** and **Romania** thanked **South Africa** for taking on the role of Working Group Chair at very short notice, and the **USA** for all the preparatory work they had done.

Decision SC52-14: The Standing Committee approved the revised CEPA Action Plan for the Ramsar Secretariat for 2016-2018.

Agenda item 19 c. Report on World Wetlands Day 2016 (verbal presentation)

and

d. World Wetlands Day Themes for 2017 and 2018 (SC52-17 *World Wetlands Day themes*)

141. The Secretariat made a presentation on the 2016 World Wetlands Day, and proposed themes for WWD 2017 and WWD 2018.

142. The **Standing Committee** took note of the document and the presentation, and thanked the Secretariat for all its work in organizing what had clearly been a successful series of events for 2016.

143. **Australia, Japan** and the **USA** all supported the theme of Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction for 2017. They and **Senegal** agreed with the idea of matching the theme of World Wetlands Day 2018 with that of COP13, the **USA** further suggesting that the exact wording of the theme be finalized once the wording of the theme for COP13 is decided.

144. **El Salvador** urged the Secretariat to engage with the 2017 meeting of the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction if this were to be adopted as the theme for 2017.

Decision SC52-15: The Standing Committee decided that the theme for World Wetlands Day 2017 would be “Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction” and that the theme for World Wetlands Day 2018 would be linked to urban wetlands, the exact wording to be decided when the theme for COP13 had been finalized.

Agenda item 19 e. Update on the Ramsar web site and the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) site (verbal presentation)

145. The **Standing Committee** agreed to remove this item from the agenda.

Agenda item 14. Ramsar Regional Initiatives

b. Assessment of existing Ramsar Regional Initiatives (SC52-Inf.Doc.04 *Ramsar Regional Initiatives: An assessment of their achievements by 2015*)

and

c. Report of the Chair of the Working Group on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives (SC52-11 Rev.1 *Update on Ramsar Regional Initiatives*)

146. The **Secretariat** introduced the revised Operational Guidelines prepared by the Working Group on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives.

147. After a discussion involving **Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Honduras, Romania, Senegal, South Africa** and **Suriname**, the **SC Chair** suspended discussion until the afternoon plenary session.

15:00-18:00

Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 14. Ramsar Regional Initiatives

- b. Assessment of existing Ramsar Regional Initiatives (SC52-Inf.Doc.04 *Ramsar Regional Initiatives: An assessment of their achievements by 2015*)
and
- c. Report of the Chair of the Working Group on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives (SC52-11 Rev.1 *Update on Ramsar Regional Initiatives*)

148. The discussion on the revised Operational Guidelines reopened, focusing upon the period for which these Guidelines would apply. **Senegal** believed that the Guidelines should be for 2016-2024, in line with the Ramsar Strategic Plan. **Brazil** and **Uruguay** maintained that they had been drafted to apply to 2016-2018, as established in Resolution XII.8 on *Regional Initiatives 2016-2018 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention*.

149. The **USA** proposed the deletion of any reference to dates in the title of the new Operational Guidelines. This was supported by **El Salvador** and **Senegal**.

Decision SC52-16: The Standing Committee adopted the revised Operational Guidelines, submitted to the 52nd Standing Committee by the Working Group for the Ramsar Regional Initiatives, as “Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention”.

150. Following adoption of the revised Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives, **Brazil** made the following intervention:

“Brazil expresses its reservation on the second sentence of paragraph 15 and the whole of paragraphs 16 and 17 of the Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention.”

151. The delegations of Uruguay, Senegal, Australia, United States, among others, called on the Secretariat, in the sense of achieving efficiency, to respect the Rules of Procedure as well as the deadlines agreed by the Parties, and not to take part in the contents of the documents that are treated by the Parties.

Decision SC52-17: The Standing Committee approved the Ramsar Regional Initiatives list as functional within the framework of the Convention for the period 2016-2018, as follows: 1) Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA), 2) Ramsar Regional Centre – Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA), 3) Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia (RRC-EA), 4) Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research in the Western Hemisphere (*Centro Regional Ramsar para la Capacitación e Investigación sobre Humedales en el Hemisferio Occidental*, CREHO), 5) West African Coastal Zone Wetlands Network (WACOWet), 6) Niger River Basin Network (NigerWet), 7) Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands (*Iniciativa Regional de Conservación y Uso Sostenible de los Humedales Altoandinos*), 8) Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of the Plata River Basin (*Iniciativa para la Conservación y Uso Sustentable de los Humedales Fluviales de la Cuenca del Plata*), 9) Caribbean Wetlands Regional Initiative (CariWet), 10) Regional Initiative for the Integral Management and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs (*Iniciativa Regional para la Conservación y Uso Racional de Manglares y Corales*), 11) East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, 12) Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet), 13) Carpathian Wetlands Initiative, 14) Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet), 15) Regional Initiative on Black and Azov Seas Coastal Wetlands (BlackSeaWet).

Decision SC52-18: The Standing Committee asked the Contracting Parties members of Ramsar Regional Initiatives, through the Working Group, to assess the applicability of Operational Guidelines as approved, at the latest four months before the 53rd Standing Committee.

Decision SC52-19: The Standing Committee requested the Working Group, in conjunction with the Secretariat, to present at the 53rd Standing Committee a summary report of the issues raised by the Ramsar Regional Initiatives and any proposals related to them.

152. At 18:15 the **SC Chair** thanked the interpreters for their support throughout the week and noted that it would be necessary to continue in English, without interpretation. The **Standing Committee** agreed to continue on this basis.

Report of the Management Working Group's Working Group on Staffing

153. On behalf of **Canada**, the Chair of the Working Group, **Australia** reported that the Management Working Group had accepted the report of the Working Group on Staffing (as contained in Annex 3 of this report).

154. The **Standing Committee** took note of the report of the Working Group on Staffing.

14 e. Consideration of new Regional Initiatives (*SC52-12 Proposals for new Ramsar Regional Initiatives*)

155. The **ASG** introduced Doc. SC52-12, indicating that the proposed budget to be allocated to each of the new Ramsar Regional Initiatives could be increased from CHF 25,000 to CHF 30,000. The CHF 20,000 indicated in the document for the workshop on Regional Initiatives on Sunday 12 June had been allocated from the SC52 budget line and so, if no further workshop were planned, the total of CHF 120,000 allocated in the 2016 budget could be divided equally among the four proposed new Initiatives. **Senegal** confirmed that no further workshop was intended and so the total sum to be divided equally between the four new Initiatives was CHF 120,000.

156. **Cambodia** thanked the IUCN Regional Office in Bangkok for support with the Indo-Burma Initiative.

Decision SC52-20: The Standing Committee endorsed the four new Ramsar Regional Initiatives named in Doc. SC52-12 and approved an allocation from the Ramsar core budget of CHF 30,000 for each (corrected from CHF 25,000 each as proposed in Document SC52-12) as follows: 1) Regional Initiative for the Amazon River Basin, 2) Regional Initiative for Central Asia, 3) Indo-Burma Regional Initiative and 4) Regional Initiative for the Senegal River Basin.

Agenda item 4. Approval of terms of reference for a future language strategy for the Convention (*SC52.03 Rev. 1 Development of a strategy outlining the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Ramsar Convention*)

157. The **UAE** as chair of the Sub-Group on COP13 presented an update on the workings of the Sub-Group and also reported that the informal working group constituted to review Doc. SC52.03 regarding a future language strategy for the Convention had met and completed its work.

158. The informal working group had produced Doc. SC52.03 Rev. 1 *Development of a strategy outlining the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Ramsar Convention*, the annex to which contained a proposed plan by the Ramsar Secretariat to

develop a strategy outlining the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Convention. This was presented to the Standing Committee for their approval.

Decision SC52-21: The Standing Committee requested the Ramsar Secretariat to develop a strategy, without consultant support, outlining the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Convention contained in the annex to Doc. SC52.03 Rev. 1.

Agenda item 5. Report of the Sub-Group on COP13

159. The **UAE** as chair of the Sub-Group on COP13 presented an update on the workings of the Sub-Group.

160. The Sub-Group on COP13 recommended that the Standing Committee approve the COP13 Provisional Agenda in SC52-21.

Decision SC52-22: The Standing Committee gave preliminary approval for the COP13 Provisional Agenda in Doc. SC52.21 and instructed that it should be submitted for detailed consideration at the 53rd Meeting of the Standing Committee.

Agenda item 21. Report of the Working Group on Resource Mobilization

161. The **USA**, as Chair of the Working Group on Resource Mobilization, presented the Group's report. The Group had met at SC52 on June 14, with Finland, Japan, Kenya, Romania, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, the UAE and the USA participating. The group had discussed an overarching set of principles to guide the Secretariat's resource mobilization efforts and developed a draft Resource Mobilization Work Plan Framework on that basis (see Annex 4 of this report), which it asked the Standing Committee to approve.

162. The Group also identified the need to re-evaluate the Partnerships Officer position, including potentially revising the title to "Resource Mobilization Officer" in order to better reflect the Parties' expectations of that position, and to review on that basis the appropriate grade level and job description. The Group was willing to provide advice and guidance on the development of a the full Resource Mobilization Work Plan to the person appointed, with a view to having the Work Plan approved by the Standing Committee at a future meeting of the Standing Committee, SC53 if possible.

Decision SC52-23: The Standing Committee 1) adopted the Resource Mobilization Work Plan Framework that had been developed, 2) took note of the Working Group's offer to advise the new Secretary General on the grade level, job description and possible revision of the title for the position currently known as the Partnerships Officer, 3) also took note of the Working Group's offer to advise the person hired to mobilize resources as they develop their first full Resource Mobilization Work Plan to guide their work, and 4) decided to adopt the first full Resource Mobilization Work Plan at a future Standing Committee, SC53 if possible.

Agenda item 22. Report of the Facilitation Working Group (formerly the Working Group on Improving Management Instruments)

163. The **USA**, as Chair of the Facilitation Working Group, reported on the Group's activities to date. Members of the Group (Kenya, Romania, Senegal, Switzerland, USA and Uruguay) had communicated intersessionally and at SC52, submitting questions to IUCN and the Secretariat

and discussing together the responses received. At SC52 the Group had had constructive discussions with the Director General of IUCN, in which Colombia and Finland had also participated. Japan and Brazil had observed the meeting. The Group considered it would be useful to meet the new Secretary General. The Group also expressed its interest in inviting representatives from Asia and Oceania to join in its work. The Group had agreed to continue its discussions intersessionally and report back to SC53.

164. The Standing Committee noted the Facilitation Working Group's commitment to continue its efforts. It also took note of its request for a meeting with the new Secretary General, back to back with one of the Executive Team meetings in January 2017, to discuss the matters entrusted to it by the Parties, and took note of the Working Group's invitation to Asia and Oceania to join the Group, which is open to additional Parties.

Agenda item 24. Other matters: Date and venue of the 53rd Meeting of the Standing Committee

165. The **ASG** reported that, at the request of the Executive Committee, the Secretariat had looked for suitable dates for SC53 in May and June 2017 and proposed the week of 29 May to 2 June, with the week of 12 June to 16 June as a second option, noting that both weeks fell within Ramadan. The meeting rooms at IUCN headquarters in Gland were available for both.

166. **Brazil**, supported by **Colombia** and **El Salvador**, suggested that the meeting be held in Geneva as it would be easier for representatives from Parties' permanent missions in Geneva to attend. Brazil proposed the CICG as a suitable venue.

167. The **ASG** presented a preliminary analysis on the option of hosting the Standing Committee meeting in Geneva.

168. The **USA** noted that there were advantages in holding the meeting in the same building as the Ramsar Secretariat's offices.

Decision SC52-24: The Standing Committee agreed that SC53 would be held in the week of 29 May to 2 June 2017 at IUCN headquarters in Gland, Switzerland.

Decision SC52-25: The Standing Committee asked the Secretariat to work with any interested Parties to prepare a paper for SC53 discussing the possibility of holding future meetings of the Committee in Geneva and requested the issue to be included in the next agenda of SC53.

Agenda item 20. Report of the Sub-Group on Finance (SC52-18 Rev.1 *Ramsar financial matters 2014/2015* and SC52-19 *Contracting Parties with outstanding annual contributions*)

169. **Senegal**, as Chair of the Sub-Group of Finance, presented the Sub-Group's report (see www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/sc52_subgroup_on_finance_report_v5.pdf), which included eight recommendations for the Standing Committee to consider.

170. The Standing Committee took note of the audited 2015 financial statements as presented in Annex 1 of document SC52-18 Rev.1, including the 2015 deficit of CHF 337,000, and the reserve fund balance of CHF 372,000 (7.3% of core budget income).

171. The Standing Committee expressed its thanks to the Parties and partners who had provided voluntary contributions in 2015, namely: Australia, Austria, Benin, Canada, Chad, Finland,

Germany, Japan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the USA, Uruguay, CBD, Danone, MAVVA, Star Alliance, UNEP-ROWA, and WWF.

172. The Standing Committee took note of the current status of Parties' outstanding annual contributions.

Decision SC52-26: The Standing Committee agreed to direct the remaining balance of the 2014 surplus of CHF 6,000 to the Reserve Fund.

Decision SC52-27: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat:

- **For countries with arrears greater than three years (from end 2015), to:**
 - **work with the Ramsar national focal point to identify the appropriate government official/minister (individual) who can resolve outstanding annual contributions,**
 - **notify the individual, in writing, of status of outstanding contributions, with copy to Finance Minister (or equivalent), and**
 - **request acknowledgement and/or payment of their outstanding contributions.**
- **Following the recommendation of African countries to Standing Committee, to:**
 - **make an assessment of the voluntary contributions of this region**
 - **make a report at SC53, and to develop a Draft Resolution changing the word voluntary to “additional” taking account of the considerations of this region.**

Decision SC52-28: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretary General to propose a 2018 austerity budget to address the increasing amount of outstanding contributions, for consideration at SC53.

Decision SC52-29: The Standing Committee decided that there is no need to change 2016 core and non-core budgets, and that any surplus at the end of 2016 should be used to replenish the Reserve Fund.

Decision SC52-30: The Standing Committee confirmed the 2017 budget as approved at COP12.

Decision SC52-31: The Standing Committee agreed to make an amendment to the table entitled “Approved Secretariat staff (core) for 2016-2018” at Resolution XII.1, Annex 4, to add one core staff member, Regional Officer – Oceania, a core funded position which had not been included in the staff list due to employment conditions.

Agenda item 24. Other matters: Adoption of the report of the 52 nd Meeting

Decision SC52-32: The Standing Committee adopted the report of the meeting for Wednesday 15 June and Thursday 16 June 2016 with minor amendments submitted by Parties, and asked the SC Chair to approve the report of the meeting for Friday 17 June.

Annex 1

Statement of the African Group and Senegal

On behalf of the African Group, we would like to thank WWF for accompanying Tunisia during the process of removing Ichkeul National Park from the Montreux Record after its inclusion in May 1995, and the Secretariat and the Standing Committee for the positive way in which they have received the withdrawal form put forward by the Ramsar Administrative Authority of Tunisia.

Regarding Senegal, Ramsar Site no.139 (*Réserve Spéciale d'Avifaune du Ndiaël*, RSAN) to reiterate, has been included in the Montreux Record since 4 July 1990, following changes to its ecological character caused by modifications to the water flow into the Site's *Grande mare* (great lake) and by agricultural developments. Senegal thanks Wetlands International for implementing in this Ramsar Site the Alliance Ecosystem Project, which made it possible to launch the process of restoring the Site and establish a waterbirds database through the monitoring projects which it funded.

Thus, to meet the challenges posed by these changes, the Government of Senegal, with support from the African Development Fund (ADF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), has begun to carry out the Project for Restoration of the Ecological and Economic Functions of Lake Guiers (*Projet de Restauration des Fonctions Ecologiques et Economiques du Lac de Guiers*, PREFELAG). As a reminder, Lake Guiers is a major channel of the Senegal River, located on the left bank in the delta region.

The project is managed by the Lake Guiers Office (*Office du Lac de Guiers*) with the support of technical partners such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and aims firstly to re-create the optimum flow of the Senegal River water towards Lake Guiers, in order to increase its storage volume from 1.2 to 2.1 billion cubic metres of water per year, and secondly to replenish water levels in the RSAN in order to create conditions for the Site's removal from the Montreux Record.

In partnership with the Lake Guiers Office, IUCN Senegal is responsible for leading the project component to develop and restore the Ndiaël reserve. Activities to be undertaken include, among other measures:

- i. updating of the reserve's management plan;
- ii. carrying out baseline studies for the development of the reserve;
- iii. designing the reserve's development plan based on topographical data; and
- iv. drawing up the file for the withdrawal of the RSAN from the Montreux Record.

To ensure the success of this process a certain number of decisions were taken:

- IUCN will draw upon the expertise of the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA);
- The Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) of the Site will be updated in 2016;
- A first Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM) will be funded and carried out jointly with experts of the WCPA by the end of the year. In this context, a proposal for terms of reference for the RAM will be submitted in the coming weeks to the Secretariat of the Convention for amendment and approval;
- A second update of the RIS, for which funding has also been acquired, is planned for after the water replenishment operations; and
- We hope that with a second RAM, as with Ichkeul in Tunisia today, the RSAN will be removed from the Montreux Record before COP13 in October 2018 at the latest.

Finally, we thank the Government of Switzerland for accepting the project submitted through the Swiss Fund for Africa, which will certainly allow us to update the RIS that have not yet been updated.

Annex 2

Report of the Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel

David Papps, Chair, CEPA Oversight Panel

1. Firstly, I want to acknowledge the hard work of the Secretariat Communications team on the CEPA program and their support for me in my role as Chair of the Panel. In particular, I want to express my gratitude to Camilla Chalmers, Magdalena Luczak and Ania Grobicki.
2. The call for nominations for the CEPA Oversight Panel was sent to Administrative Authorities in July 2015. Nominations were reviewed by myself and the Vice Chair of the STRP and the following Panel was appointed (there is more detail on the Ramsar Webpage):
 - Channa Bambaradeniya (Sri Lanka) – vice chair of the STRP and an ecologist;
 - Abdou Salam Kane (Senegal) – chair of the Subgroup on Finance;
 - Molefe Mokhatla (Lesotho) – from his country’s Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs;
 - Sari Airas (Finland) – Finland’s Government CEPA National Focal Point;
 - Christine Prietto (Australia) – Australian non-government CEPA Focal Point
 - Pyae Phyo Aung (Myanmar) – marine biologist and works on the Asia Australia Flyway Network;
 - Chris Rostron (UK) – head of Wetland Link International and UK National NGO Focal Point;
 - Arturo Dominici (Panama) – Regional Ramsar Centre representative.
3. I also wish to remind delegates and colleagues of the role of the Panel, particularly in light of Resolution XII.9 (which established a CEPA Working Group).
4. Paragraph 9 of XII.9 established a CEPA Working Group with four quite specific roles:
 - i. Guide the communication activities of the Secretariat, including setting priorities and guiding the design of the Secretariat’s CEPA Action Plan;
 - ii. Monitor the effectiveness of the CEPA Action Plan;
 - iii. Report to each Management Working Group; and
 - iv. Develop, with the advice of STRP, a new approach for advising and supporting CEPA in the Convention for submission to COP 13.
5. Paragraph 11 of XII.9 confirmed that the CEPA Oversight Panel will:
 - i. Continue to monitor and report on CEPA issues at the national level within the Convention;
 - ii. Monitor and report on progress of implementation of the CEPA programme established in COP 12; and
 - iii. Advise Standing Committee and the Secretariat on the CEPA work priorities at the national and international levels.
6. Based on these paragraphs and very constructive discussions on the side of this Standing Committee with the USA, South Africa, Finland and within the CEPA Working Group more broadly, I believe we now have clarity on the roles and responsibilities of both groups and confidence there will be no duplication in work.
7. Since the last Standing Committee the Oversight Panel met (by Skype and via teleconference) in March 2016 and then June 2016. These meetings were relatively brief and focussed on clarification around the relative roles and responsibilities of the Oversight Panel and the Working Group. The Panel provided comments on draft Secretariat CEPA Work Plans. It was

agreed that a work plan for the Panel for this triennium would be developed once the Chair had had the benefit of discussions at this Standing Committee with the Working Group.

8. As I have noted earlier, those discussions have occurred and I believe we have a clear way forward. I expect to be in a position to provide a report around significant progress by the Panel at the next Standing Committee.

Annex 3

Report of the Staffing Working Group to the Management Working Group

The Staffing Working Group (SWG) met June 14 and June 16, 2016.

Members present were: Australia, Canada (chair), Nepal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Senegal, South Africa, United States of America, and Uruguay.

The working group discussed 6 separate, but related topics. They are as follows:

1. Oceania Officer (SC52.INFDOC-O7)
2. Asian proposed position funded by external sources (SC52.INFDOC-O8)
3. Level (IUCN functional group) of regional officers
4. Location/housing of regional officers
5. Regional officers in Europe, Americas, and Asia
6. Secretariat organograms

Oceania Officer

1. The SWG informs the Management Working Group (MWG) that it has confirmed with the Secretariat that there is existing budget in the Ramsar core budget for this position.
2. The SWG reminds the MWG that Resolution 12.1 did not identify this position (Oceania Officer) in Annex 4 as one of the 23 approved positions in the Secretariat because of the type of employment held by the past incumbent (consultancy vs employment contract) and it requests that the Finance Sub-Group take note of this discrepancy and account for this in their report at SC52.
3. The SWG recommends that the MWG approve the staffing of the Oceania Regional Officer as a P1.

Asian support (proposed position funded by external sources)

1. The SWG reminds the MWG that there are no core funds set aside for a Regional Officer in Asia and that this proposed position is not identified in Resolution 12.1 (annex 4).
2. The SWG requests the MWG take note of Resolution 12.1 (annex 3) which outlines priorities for non-core budget (fundraising initiatives).
3. The SWG informs the MWG that IUCN has confirmed cost-sharing of this position and agrees to house the position in its Bangkok Office.
4. The SWG informs the MWG that Contracting Parties in the Asian Region are actively searching for the additional necessary funds to support this position.
5. The SWG requests the MWG to ask the Subgroup on Finance and the Secretariat to make sure that no resources from the core budget are allocated towards any costs associated with this position, including, but not limited to salary, admin support, supplies, logistics, travel, etc.
6. The SWG asks the MWG to take note that if the Parties in the Asian Region are successful in raising the necessary funds for this position, it will be staffed working with the IUCN. This will not be a Ramsar position.
7. Finally, the SWG request that the MWG take note of this innovative approach.

Level (IUCN Functional group) for Ramsar regional officers

1. The SWG recommends to the MWG that all current and future regional officers are classified as P1 functional group.

Location/Housing

1. The SWG recommends to the MWG in terms of where a regional officer is located, that for all core-funded regional officers the region, in discussion with the Secretariat, determines the best location for their respective regional officer. This will be in line with IUCN employment processes and rules and considers Ramsar's financial constraints.

Regional Officers for Americas/Europe/Asia

1. The SWG reminds the MWG that there are currently no Regional Officer positions in the Secretariat (funded from core budget) for Europe, the Americas, or Asia.
2. The SWG asks the MWG to take note that those 3 regional officers are still necessary and should be funded if additional core budget funds become available in the future.

Secretariat Organizational Charts

1. The SWG requests that the MWG ask the Secretariat to make its organograms clear as to which positions are funded and by which source of funds (e.g., permanent core position, temporary, non-core, project specific position (e.g., MAVIA, Danone)).
2. The SWG requests that the MWG ask the Secretariat to delete the positions currently identified on the organogram as "vacant" namely, the European, Americas, and Asian Regional Officers. These 3 positions are not vacant; rather, they do not currently exist. This edit will avoid confusion.
3. Lastly, the SWG requests that the MWG ask the Secretariat to review the job description of the Regional Officer for Africa to ensure it reflects their primary focus on the geographic region of Africa.

Annex 4

Resource Mobilization Work Plan Framework

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, known as the Ramsar Convention, is one of the oldest environmental conventions and is also one of the few that has such a direct reach and impact on the ground in the Contracting Parties and worldwide. Availability of resources is a challenge for governments and multilateral environmental agreements alike. In response, the Ramsar Convention actively seeks to find financing mechanisms to finance Parties' articulated priorities, all of which assist our work in implementing the Convention.

In mobilizing resources to support the work of the Convention, the Secretariat is to:

- Take a whole-of-Secretariat approach. While the Parties have established a dedicated staff position within the Secretariat to focus on resource mobilization, efforts will be most successful when all members of the Secretariat staff support the efforts for fundraising as a part of their jobs and are working together to support the efforts in this regard, and indeed Parties fully expect this will be the case.
- Include both efforts to ensure that existing collaborative relationships are leveraged to their fullest extent, as well as seek new sources of funding.
- Explore innovative, creative, outside-the-box approaches.
- Seek to broaden the donor base to be more innovative in financing, including private foundations, the private sector, and other organizations/entities that may be outside of the biodiversity sphere.
- Leverage the value proposition of the Ramsar Convention, Ramsar sites, wetlands, and formal relationships with International Organization Partners (IOPs) broadly in its efforts to target its resource mobilization-related messaging.
- Ensure it is effectively translating Parties' non-core budget priorities into terminology that can be easily matched to and understood by the specific donor and express the ways the Convention and Ramsar sites as well as other wetlands are relevant to their interests and priorities.

Efforts at resource mobilization are to address the Parties' priority interests as indicated in the table below from Resolution XII.1 Annex 3 and all efforts are to be focused and undertaken to meet these articulated needs. In mobilizing resources, it is anticipated that approaches will be strategic and with big-picture, long-term stability in mind.

Res XII.1 Annex 3

No.	Non-core budget priorities 2016-2018	3-year funding requirement (CHF)	Notional Timeline (target funds in CHF)
1	Ramsar Advisory Missions for Parties requiring assistance	600,000	200,000: 1 st quarter 2017 200,000: 3 rd quarter 2017 200,000: 2 nd quarter 2018
2	STRP 2016-2018 programme of work support	300,000	137,000 (SoWWS): 1 st quarter 2017 163,000: 2 nd quarter 2017
3	RSIS, IM/IT (Website) Continuing Development	175,000	58,333: 1 st quarter 2017 58,333: 3 rd quarter 2017 58,333: 2 nd quarter 2018
4	Pre-COP13 regional meetings (delegates support and meeting costs for preparatory meetings)	650,000	November 2017
5	COP13 (2018) sponsorship to eligible delegates	600,000	January 2018
6	Arabic language introduction and translation support	250,000	83,333: 1 st quarter 2017 83,333: 3 rd quarter 2017 83,333: 2 nd quarter 2018
7	Small Grants Funds for protection and wise use of wetlands	1,000,000	333,333: 1 st quarter 2017 333,333: 3 rd quarter 2017 333,333: 2 nd quarter 2018
8	Regional Initiative Networks and Centres support (priority activities)	150,000	75,000: 2 nd quarter 2017 75,000: 2 nd quarter 2018
9	Ramsar CEPA Programme (2016-2021), exclusion of World Wetlands Day	300,000	100,000: 1 st quarter 2017 100,000: 3 rd quarter 2017 100,000: 2 nd quarter 2018
10	On-line system for National Reports, reporting and indicators development	175,000	Online system: 1 st quarter 2017
	TOTAL	4,200,000	